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ABSTRACT

Management by Objectives (MBO) has been used by many businesses as a means of improving performance by managers. MBO involves setting agreed performance objectives in writing and includes a periodic review of the degree of achievement of those objectives. This document argues that MBO principles should be used by colleges and universities, and it describes how to proceed. The type of MBO approach suggested is based on the unique features of an educational environment. It is suggested that a design and implementation report be written prior to beginning an MBO system. The essential elements that such a report should cover are: purpose of the MBO system; the MBO statement; who will write statements and when; a timetable; and a training plan. Some suggestions are also made about how to write objectives. Examples are provided. (Author/KE)

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Management by Objectives for Colleges and Universities

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ABSTRACT

Management by Objectives (MBO) has been used by many businesses as a means of improving performance by managers. MBO involves setting agreed performance objectives in writing and periodic review of the degree of achievement of those objectives. It is a form of management based on results, not tasks. This paper argues that MBO principles should be used by colleges and universities and it describes how to proceed. The type of MBO approach suggested is based on the unique features of an educational environment. The resulting MBO system characteristics and some thoughts on implementation are provided. Experience gained from applying MBO principles in one college is included.

I. INTRODUCTION

Management by Objectives (MBO) is a system of management that is well known in the management literature, and widely practiced in business and some nonprofit institutions. MBO has had very little use in universities and colleges to date, but at the same time there is great interest on the part of administration, faculty, and staff to improve management. Therefore, it is important to examine MBO, or some variant of it, as it might apply specifically to colleges and universities. This paper includes a discussion of concepts of MBO, experience with MBO to date, and how MBO might be used by colleges and universities.

Definition of MBO

There is no common definition of MBO. It is a concept that is pursued, rather than a specific system that is installed [13]. There are, however, the following common elements found in most MBO systems:

1. A Focus on Results or Outcomes. MBO thinkers advocate that management should define intended results (objectives) and be held responsible for results. This is contrasted to management by tasks, where the accountability focus is on activities and not on results.
2. Participation. MBO includes the idea that managers should participate in setting their own objectives, and that much of the energy in setting objectives should come from managers

themselves, rather than from their superiors. Ideally, this will result in greater commitment and accomplishment by the individual manager.

3. Feedback on Results. MBO systems usually include some kind of feedback on actual vs. intended results. This feedback generally takes a positive form, and it indicates to managers that they are in fact accountable for results.
4. Formal Statement of Objectives. MBO systems include a written commitment between a manager and his/her superior on intended results, usually for the next year. This document then becomes the basis for feedback on results achieved, and generation of new statements of intended results on a cyclic basis.

All MBO systems incorporate the above four points in some way. However, the emphasis on each of these points varies widely.

The degree to which the statements of objectives emphasizes results rather than tasks varies in practice, all the way from a pure statement of results to a pure statement of tasks. It is difficult to formulate responsibilities in terms of results, when past experience has been in terms of tasks. Nevertheless, MBO statements should be statements of results which are backed up by detailed action plans. In practice one usually has to settle for a mixture of results and task statements, at least in the beginning.

The amount of participation also varies widely in most MBO systems. To insure maximum participation, subordinates should prepare a first draft of how they see the objectives for their job for the next year. After discussing this statement with his/her superior, a manager may need to revise the statements to incorporate the superior's views, until mutual agreement is

reached. However, there are as many variations on the method of preparing and revising these statements as there are people. Furthermore, the relative power positions regarding who is really setting the objectives varies widely.

Feedback is practiced in most MBO systems. It may be quarterly or annually, written or verbal. Here again, there is no exact form. However, without any feedback MBO is likely to become a paperwork exercise where objectives are written, put in a drawer and left there. Even if feedback is practiced, it must be meaningful. Ideally, frequent reference to intended results is the best method of feedback.

In my experience all MBO systems include a written statement of objectives. This is one element that appears to be constant.

Use of MBO

The way in which MBO is used varies even more widely than the elements of a MBO system [9]. The variation in uses is a more serious problem, because the benefits of a MBO system ultimately depend on what it is used for and how it is used. MBO has been used in at least the five following ways:

1. Dynamic Job Description. The problem with most job descriptions is that they are out of date and are a laundry list of task assignments. MBO can be used to replace job descriptions with a results orientation and an annual update.
2. Accountability System. MBO can be used to gain accountability and control over an organization, but it should not be used in that way. As will be discussed, everyone recognizes the need for accountability, but such efforts can be harmful or beneficial depending on the approach used.

3. Performance Contracting. MBO can be used as a basis for individual performance contracts down to the faculty level. Such use can lead to a deterioriation of morale when the organizational objectives are not clear, reward systems are not accepted, or pay is tied to ill-defined performance levels. Performance contracting is a very dangerous use of MBO, especially in the beginning and can only be achieved satisfactorily after many years of effort.
4. Human Relations Effort. MBO can be used to improve human relations in a participative management effort. Such a use would emphasize superior-subordinate relations as a key element.
5. Management System. This use stresses MBO as a system of management which includes all of the elements mentioned above; results orientation, participation, and feedback. It becomes not only a system but a style of management toward which the institution strives.

Most thinkers on MBO favor the use of MBO according to the management system point of view. This is the broadest viewpoint where MBO becomes a part of every managers job, and a way of management by self-control, as Drucker [5] calls it. To use MBO in this way will require, however, a careful method of introduction, constant attention to the system as it develops, and possibly five to ten years of effort. MBO is expensive, time consuming, and it should not be treated as a quick management fix or a gimick to try for a while. There are numerous institutions that have treated MBO in a superficial way and failed.

At this point, we have to ask whether MBO is applicable and appropriate for educational institutions. The issue is not whether educational institutions exist for a purpose. Of course they do. The issue is whether installation of an MBO system will result in better education or whether it will weaken the institution in some fundamental way.

The danger in MBO is that a statement of more precise objectives may open up individuals and organizational units to a fundamental change in governance. MBO information can be used as a tool to reduce autonomy, and increase control in the name of efficiency or effectiveness. So the danger in MBO is that people may misuse the system to their own ends. If this facet is understood in the beginning and guarded against, the positive benefits of MBO can accrue to an educational organization.

Experience with MBO

MBO has met with great success and some failures, as well, in business. MBO was first formulated in 1954 by Peter Drucker [4], when he advocated that every manager should write a management letter once a year, and when this letter is agreed to by his/her superior, it should become a basis for management by self-control. In the last twenty years many businesses and some nonprofits [1], [10] have adopted MBO. The business administration literature abounds with hundreds of MBO articles, many of them extolling its virtues.

There is some empirical research available on the effects of MBO in business organizations. Probably the best source is a book by Carroll and Tosi [2]. As they indicate, a considerable body of research supports the core of the MBO concept. The research also points out the difficulties that are often encountered in actually implementing MBO systems.

Recent studies have been done on the degree of MBO success. Singular [15] summarizes research that indicates failures in some MBO programs. These failures are attributed to the fact that companies apply MBO as a status symbol. They do not devote the time and effort needed to make MBO work, and they are not committed to providing a proper organizational climate. This points out how difficult it is to be successful with MBO, which is, of course, true for other management systems too [14].

In educational institutions there has been very little actual experience with MBO. Only a few institutions can ever be identified from the literature who have tried it [6], [16]. The best source available, based on actual experience, is the book by Lahti [6]. Furthermore, there have been very few empirical studies on MBO in educational institutions. So far, MBO in colleges and universities is largely in an experimental and promotional stage. MBO ideas are being promoted by some consultants, and a few institutions are trying it. But, awareness of what MBO can do, what it cannot do, and concepts of design and implementation of MBO systems are sadly lacking [7]. It is hoped that this paper will contribute something in that direction.

There have been several national efforts in higher education that focused on management concerns. These efforts fail to recognize MBO ideas. NCHEMS[1] has not pursued MBO. They seem to be focused on cost analysis and derivatives of PPB systems. College and University Business Administration [11], the authoritative source on business administration

[1]National Center for Higher Education Management Systems at WICHE (Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education), Boulder, Colorado.

in higher education, fails to mention MBO. And, the Carnegie Commission on higher education makes little or no mention of MBO. Awareness of MBO in higher education is indeed low.

II. HOW TO USE MBO

The first question to ask is whether your institution is ready for MBO? The second question is how to proceed? With regard to the first question, we have already indicated that MBO should not be introduced as a restrictive management system to gain power and control. As a matter of fact, it should achieve the opposite; diffusion of responsibility and control to lower organizational levels. The second requirement is that the institution must be willing to devote the time and effort over the long run to get MBO working. This commitment is often lacking and can lead to failure. Finally, the institution, its president, and other managers must be willing to make MBO a part of the institution's management style. MBO will not be successful, if viewed as another management gimick or technique.

If the climate is right for MBO, there are several ways to introduce it. In my opinion, the best way to proceed is to prepare a design and implementation document on MBO before starting the system. The document should cover: (1) the purposes of the system, (2) the form of MBO, (3) who is going to be involved, (4) timing of the system, and (5) a training plan. This document could be produced by a group or an individual, but it should be widely circulated and accepted before starting the MBO program.

There are other easier methods for introducing MBO, but none of them are liable to be as effective as the one suggested above. The other approaches, all of which have been used are:

1. MBO By Edict. The president or a group of senior officials attends an MBO conference or a meeting where MBO is discussed. Upon returning to the institution, MBO is started by edict as though it were a fixed and straightforward technique that could be adopted in such a manner. The edict may be accompanied by a short letter indicating in very general terms what is desired, but most of the important questions are left open. These questions may be delegated to the personnel office or someone else to unravel as the system unfolds.
2. MBO By Consultants. The institution calls in consultants for a seminar with all key managers, which may last one or two days. After this seminar, MBO proceeds pretty much as in (1). This approach is somewhat better in the training area, but it assumes that questions of purpose, form and timing can be answered by consultants. These questions can only be answered by institutional policy.
3. MBO By Staff. The task of starting MBO is delegated to the personnel office or planning office. This is the worst of all three cases, because line management is not involved. The system is likely to emphasize paperwork, and objectives of the personnel or planning office, such as job descriptions or planning forms.

If one is committed to preparation of some type of a reasonable document prior to introduction of MBO, what should the document cover? Some of the important issues are described next. This material is based in part

on experience gained by the author over the last two years in applying MBO concepts at Augsburg College, Minneapolis, Minnesota.[1]

1. Purpose of the System. The design and implementation report should address the particular purposes that the institution is emphasizing, and the reasons for introducing MBO. Some possible purposes are:
   a. More teamwork in achieving common goals.
   b. Participation in planning by those expected to implement plans.
   c. Greater communication about what others are trying to acommplish.
   d. Clarification of responsibilities.
   e. Evaluation of accomplishments against intended results.
   f. Development of managerial and leadership skills.
   g. Greater effectiveness in reaching goals.
   h. Greater efficiency through less organizational slippage.

   Some combination of the above items or all of them may be stressed. Whatever the case, an institution should choose the purposes that meet its needs.
2. The MBO Statement. Some format for MBO statements should be prescribed, but in no case should this be rigid. Most institutions avoid the use of MBO forms due to the accompanying rigidity and stigma. An example of items that might be included in an MBO statement follows:

[1]Several individuals who were also involved in the Augsburg MBO efforts were: Carl Adams, Burton Fosse, Bruce Gildseth, Theodore Kellogg, Kermit Paulson, Marianne Sander, and Myles Stenshoel.

A. Assessment of Planning Conditions

1. Review of last year's results
2. Problems and opportunities
3. Critical planning assumptions or imperatives

B. Plans for Next Year

1. Objectives
2. Performance indicators
3. Activities to meet objectives

Preparation of such a document by each manager or organizational unit would be quite time consuming. Many organizations do with less detail and simply state objectives in writing with the rest of the items handled on a verbal basis. More examples of formats will be given later.

3. Who and When. The question of who should prepare statements of objectives is an important issue. Generally, the key groups are shown below.

Administrative	Academic
President & V.P.'s	Faculty as a Whole
Staff	Committees of the Faculty
Dept. Heads	Academic Administrators
Division Heads	Academic Depts. & Colleges
	Faculty Members

On the administrative side, managers can write objectives and be held accountable for the performance of their unit, pretty much like business organizations. On the academic

side, things are quite different. In some cases, one must hold groups accountable, not individuals, e.g. faculty as a whole, faculty committees, and departments and colleges. In most cases department chairman and even department heads cannot set objectives for their department and be held personally accountable for their accomplishment because they lack the control to implement these objectives. Therefore, the entire department must be held accountable and not only the department chairman or head. This is a crucial distinction between the business model and the educational model.

Secondly, a decision must be made on who should write MBO objectives first. There is no best way here. It is simply a matter of choice whether everyone tries to write objectives, or just the administrative side first, or just the top layer first, or even the bottom layer first. There is generally some benefit in using an incremental and evolutionary approach in writing objectives, especially for large organizations.

4. Timetable. A timetable is important because it specifies both activities and schedule. A timetable might look something like the one below.

Institutional Goals Set	By May 1
Units and Managers Write Objectives	By July 1
1st Informal Review of Results	By October 1
2nd Informal Review of Results	By January 1
3rd Informal Review of Results	By April 1
Final Written Review of Actual Results	By June 30.

The timetable assumes the MBO year runs from July 1 to June 30. This timing should be compatible with budget preparation, compensation review and so on. Coordination with other management processes is very important and should be thought out in advance.

5. Training. Finally the MBO development and implementation plan should include a specification of training that people will receive before they are expected to use MBO. As a minimum all participants should have the system explained to them in advance through a seminar or training meeting. Training is often overlooked and leads to misunderstanding and confusion.

A report of the type described above will address the important issues inherent in a MBO system before the institution rushes into implementation. Such a report recognizes the fact that MBO is not a fixed, rigid system; rather there are many questions of institutional style, policy and choice that should be answered.

There is a stigma in the use of the term MBO in colleges and universities. Some individuals object to the term management in MBO because it implies control and conformity to them. Some view MBO as a business technique. The language of many MBO articles is not appropriate for higher education, e.g. superior-subordinate relationships. To reduce this stigma it is best to avoid the use of the term MBO in colleges and universities. Augsburg College recognized this problem and called their MBO-like efforts, The College Annual Planning Process (CAPP).

III. WRITING OBJECTIVES

At the heart of an MBO system are the objectives themselves. Many individuals do not know how to write objectives, and need training. At the same time, there is a lack of examples of well written objectives, especially for colleges and universities. This section provides some principles that are important in writing objectives and a few examples for colleges and universities.

In the first place, it is important to distinguish between mission, goals and objectives. All three of these are statements of purpose or intended outcome. The only difference is in the amount of specificity, with mission being the least specific, goals more specific, and finally objectives most specific. A mission statement should be very broad and enduring for some period of time. Goals should be more specific statements of direction which further refine the mission. Objectives should be statements that are verifiable or testable. Some objectives will be measurable, in that they can be quantified; others will simply be testable by stated criteria, so that one can tell whether the objective has been achieved or not. In an MBO system, one is striving for statements of objectives, not goals.

Another term quite widely used is measure of performance (MOP). A MOP is an indicator of the level of achievement of a goal or objective. Several MOP's may apply to one goal or objective. You will find that the terminology, as defined above, is not precisely used in the literature or in practice. Nevertheless, the distinctions are useful whatever they might be called by one author or another.

There are three general sources that are commonly used to generate or suggest objectives. These sources are: (1) the responsibilities of a manager or unit, (2) problems/opportunities as seen by the manager or unit, (3) higher level goals or objectives. By thinking systematically through these three sources, one can generate pertinent objectives.

Criteria have been proposed for statements of objectives [3] and [12]. A fairly common list of critera follows. Objectives should be:

1. Statements of what is intended, not how
2. Precise (testable), not fuzzy
3. Challenging, yet realistic and attainable
4. Jointly developed by individuals/units and superiors
5. Consistent with responsibilities and organizational goals
6. Revised as conditions and assumptions change
7. The basis for sound performance review
8. Short range, usually one year
9. In writing.

These critera are helpful in writing and revising statements of objectives.

Two techniques for writing objectives are described next. The first, is a process of refinement from fuzzy goals into more precise objectives. Mager [8] shows how to do this in his excellent book. Basically, one begins with a goal statement and then works towards one or several measures of performance that can be used to test accomplishment of the goal. Test your skills by checking which of the following are goals (fuzzies) and which are performance measures (testable).

1. _____ Write a paper
2. _____ Appreciate poetry
3. _____ Recite a poem
4. _____ Enjoy music
5. _____ Attend a concert

Mager argues that one should strive to write performance measures (1, 3, 5) so that goal achievement can be tested.

The second technique for writing objectives is based on listing responsibilities in general terms and refining them into more testable criteria. An example for a hypothetical controller is shown in Appendix 1. Each responsibility area has one or more results expected, and each of these results leads in turn to specific objectives. Managers find this three column method very useful when called upon to write objectives for their area of responsibility.

One can quite easily develop examples for the administrative side of colleges and universities, since the parallels to business are quite strong. Coming up with examples for academic areas is quite another matter, and the literature lacks such examples.

Appendix 2 is an attempt at writing an MBO example for an academic department. This example stresses several ideas. First, it lists areas of responsibilities that are typical for a department in a liberal arts college. These responsibilities are listed as goal or objective areas in the example. The faculty is asked to develop whatever areas they feel are appropriate for their own department, and many departments already have some statements of goals. The second column in Appendix 2 shows methods of accomplishment for each goal or objective. This column is needed as a constant reminder

of the difference between goals and tasks. Finally, measures of performance (or tests) are listed in the last column to indicate that some testability of these goals is desired.

In using this format two points should be stressed. First, Appendix 2 is only an example of form and content. A department should be encouraged to change the content to suit its situation. Secondly, communications and development of better measurement tools might be stressed as the purpose of the whole effort. It should be recognized that measurement problems are crucial in setting educational objectives, and the best that can be done is to make some progress in clarification of the department's goals, plus development of better measurement instrumentation over a long period of time.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

This paper has provided an introduction to MBO as it might be applied in colleges and universities. MBO is a general system of management or management style and not a specific technique. Therefore, MBO should be carefully defined prior to introduction for each particular organization.

Experience with MBO in colleges is very limited and the awareness of MBO in the higher education field is low. MBO has experienced some failures in businesses, but they can often be attributed to how the system was used or introduced [15]. Therefore, this paper has discussed how one should proceed to decide whether MBO is useful for an organization, and how to design and implement an MBO system.

If MBO is adopted, it is suggested that a design and implementation report be written prior to beginning an MBO system. The essential elements that such a report should cover are; purpose of the MBO system, the MBO statement, who will write statements and when, a timetable, and a training plan. All of these elements are matters of organizational policy; they are not part of MBO per se. This point does not seem to be generally understood in the MBO literature, and probably leads to implementation difficulties.

Finally, some suggestions were made about how to write objectives. This skill is critically lacking among managers and administrators. Furthermore, there is a lack of examples of MBO objectives for colleges and universities. A few examples were provided.

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Appendix 1

How to Write Objectives for Responsibilities (Hypothetical Comptroller Example

Responsiblities (List of responsibilities)	Results Expected	Objectives
1. Accounts Payable	Keep high credit rating	- Maintain a rating of at least A-1 with credit agencies
	Take discounts	- Take 90% of all cost discounts from vendors
2. Accounts Recivable	Keep old receivables low	- Keep two month and older receivable accounts at __% of total recievables
	Maintain accuracy	- Keep account errors to a level of .1% based on customer complaint
3. Computer Operations	Get reports out on time	- Keep the number of scheduled report days late per year to ____
	Meet users needs	- Prepare an MIS development plan by ___
	High accuracy	- Hold the number of user complaints on accuracy of reports to _____ per year.
4. Financial Control	Keep cash low	- Maintain an average cash balance of $_____
	Insure financial control	- Pass the annual auditing standards which are prescribed.

Appendix 2

Sample Objectives for Academic Department 1975-76

General Goal or Objective	Method for Accomplishment (1975-76)	How Measured to Tested (1975-76)
Advising		
1. Goal: To assist students in selecting a curriculum to meet their individual goals.	1a Inform students on options in writing and/or by personal contact with advisors. 1b Meet with students to help them clarify their goals and the options available.	1a Student opinion of the advising process, and student awareness of the curriculum and of their goals. By periodic sampling of student opinion. 1b Frequency of contact with students. 1c By appropriateness of courses selected.
Graduate Output and Placement (for departments with majors)		
2. Goal: To achieve a satisfactory numerical output of graduates that are placed in graduate school or vocations.	2a By maintaining a strong major in the department. 2b By recruiting students into the major.	2a To graduate _____ majors per year. 2b To achieve a level of _____% of graduates going into graduate school, _____% going into _____, etc.
Student Knowledge		
3. Goal: Each student should exhibit a mastery of his/her subject area.	3a By appropriate instruction in the departments courses.	3a By testing on standardized comprehensive exams and comparison to norms. (maybe sample of students) 3b By student opinion of knowledge gained.
Student Attitudes		
4. Goal: To develop in our students attitudes of good scholarship and objective and critical thinking. To also help our students develop self-confidence, self-discipline, perserverence and innovation.	4a By faculty setting positive examples for students 4b By including material aimed at attitude development in departmental courses.	4a By defining behavioral objectives and measuring progress relative to these objectives for our students in courses where this is appropriate. 4b By student opinion of the extent of goal achievement. Periodic sample of students.

General Goal or Objective	Method for Accomplishment (1975-76)	How Measured or Tested (1975-76)
Faculty Workload		
5. Goal: To establish a workload that permits each faculty member to teach and advise well.	5a By holding new preparations to a level of two or less per term. 5b By allowing credit for teaching labs equal to _____ regular course.	5a By comparing actual workloads to those desired in numerical terms.
Student Recruiting		
6. Goal: To maintain an adequate number of students taking the departments course offerings.	6a By working with Admissions to secure new students. 6b By contacting students individually by telephone. 6c By following up on students interest of expression with a department brochure and personal contact.	6a By recording the number of student contacts made. 6b By comparing average class sizes with other departments.
Curriculum Review and Development		
7. Goal: To maintain a relevant set of course offerings and requirements for the major.	7a Periodic review of course content, curriculum and major course offerings.	7a By completion of scheduled reviews. 7b By comparison to other colleges and to accrediting standards.
Scholarly Activity and Faculty Development		
8. Goal: To promote faculty growth in their professional fields.	8a Conduct three seminars during the year on matters of interest to the department. 8b To encourage each faculty member to belong at at least one professional group of his/her choice. 8c To encourage each faculty member to write scholarly papers.	8a By number of seminars held and quality. 8b By membership in professional groups. 8c By numbers and quality of papers written and published.

General Goal or Objective	Method for Accomplishment (1975-76)	How Measured or Tested (1975-76)
Community Relations		
9. Goal: To make the college known to its community and to potential sources of student and financial support.	9a Work with the public relations office to publicize faculty and student activities.	9a By determining awareness of outsiders of the department.
	9b Encourage each faculty member to make contacts outside the college.	9b By number and type of outside contacts.